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ABSTRACT

The internal evaluator hired to study the early graduation program at Marshall-University High School was assigned three specific tasks: to determine the level of satisfaction of those students who have, from the time of the program's formal inception in 1970-71, opted for early graduation (that is, graduation before June of their twelfth year); to compare the level of satisfaction of students presently undertaking the early graduation option with that of students who had undertaken that option in the previous four years; and to determine if any trends had developed in the program that should be dealt with by the Southeast Alternatives decision-makers. Several methods were used to gather data. Questionnaires were sent to former students who had graduated early; and interviews were conducted with students who were planning to graduate early during the current year, with students who had accumulated enough credits to graduate early but who nevertheless elected to stay in school, and with four teachers who were familiar with many of the present and past early graduates. The data is compared and the major findings are summarized. Appendices contain the interview and survey instruments. (Author/IRT)

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The Marshall-University High School Early Graduation Program

March 20, 1975

V. Katherine Gray
Internal Evaluator

This is a Southeast Alternatives Level I formative evaluation report prepared as part of the Marshall-University High School evaluation effort. Ideas expressed in the report do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Minneapolis Public Schools administration or the Minneapolis School Board.

EA 008 528

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON SOUTHEAST ALTERNATIVES

October, 1974

The Experimental Schools Program (ESP) is designed to test comprehensive change in education with the intent to facilitate the transition from research and experimentation to practice. Southeast Alternatives, one component of ESP, is dedicated to the following goals:

I. "[The project will provide] a curriculum which helps children master basic skills...."

II. "The project will test four alternative school styles (K-6) and selected options in schooling programs for grades 7-12 articulated upon the elementary alternatives."

III. "The project will test decentralized governance with some transfer of decision making power from both the Minneapolis Board of Education and the central administration of the Minneapolis Public Schools."

IV. "The project will test comprehensive change over a five year period from 6/1/71 - 6/30/76 combining promising school practices in a mutually reinforcing design. Curriculum staff training, administration, teaching methods, internal research, and governance in SEA make up the main mutually reinforcing parts."

ESP was initiated in 1971 by the United States Office of Education and is now directed by the National Institute of Education (NIE). In May, 1971 three school districts, Minneapolis Public Schools, Berkeley Unified School District of Berkeley, California and Franklin Pierce School District of Tacoma, Washington, were selected as experimental school sites. There are five major experimental school sites and 13 smaller ones as of 1974.

Southeast Alternatives, the name given to the Minneapolis Public Schools' Experimental School Project, was funded for five years. On June 1, 1971, a 27-month operation grant of $3,580,077 was made to the school district. A final 33-month contract for $3,036,122 was approved by the National Institute of Education (NIE) on May 22, 1974.

The 2,140 K-12 students in the project include a racially and economically diverse urban population. Southeast Minneapolis, bounded by factories,

flour mills, freeways, multiple dwellings, residential neighborhoods, shopping areas and railroads, also houses the main campus of the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis. Stately old homes, low income apartments and expensive condominiums are all located in the area. This mixture of ages, occupations, interests, and life styles supports a diversity of views about the nature of public education which the five SEA alternative schools established by parent choice reflect.

At the elementary level students may choose to attend any one of four major alternative programs:

The Contemporary School at Tuttle utilizes the graded, primarily self-contained classroom structure. The basic skills of mathematics and language are developed through an individualized multi-text, multi-media approach. Students move between their homerooms and a vareity of centers to participate in learning activities throughout the entire school day.

The Continuous Progress School in the Pratt building allows children to advance at their own speeds without regard to grade level. Children are placed in homeroom groupings according to their reading placement and spend 60% of their day in these homerooms. All subject areas are taught by the homeroom teacher. Mornings are structured with language arts, math, social studies, science, music and other curricular areas. About 40% of student time is spent in two-week interest groups which are selected by students, faculty, parents and volunteers.

The Open School at Marcy offers its students an opportunity to influence their education. An integrated curriculum which emphasizes the process approach, that of children learning how to learn, to make independent judgments and to discover their interests, is offered. Children are grouped in multi-aged "families" and a flexible daily schedule allows times for activities at various resource centers. The Marcy Community Day plan makes it possible for students to take extended trips into the city or wilderness to expand

their educational experience.

The Free School (K-12) offers a flexible curriculum which allows students to pursue the areas they wish to develop and experience with emphasis on making the curriculum relevant to present day issues and enhancing students' skills, knowledge and inner autonomy for acting as free people in an environment of rapid, almost radical change. The Free School is particularly committed to recognize and oppose racism, sexism and class oppression in today's world. Students are grouped into younger (primary), middle and older (secondary) categories. Although basic skills are stressed, and graduation requirements are set, a flexible approach is used in achieving goals.

The transitional program at Marshall-University High School has been designed to meet the needs of the diverse groups of students coming from the various SEA elementary programs. An Open classroom and a Continuous Progress classroom are available for students in 6th-8th grades. Students 11 and 12 years of age may choose to remain in their elementary school until grade 7 or enter either of the transitional programs. Graded classrooms are available to 7th and 8th graders. A.L.E., the adjusted learning environment for students with special needs, and a special reading center are also offered to Junior High students. Teachers work in teams to offer a coordinated program.

A flexible array of courses and activities are available at the High School level. Each Marshall-U student, with parental consent, designs his or her own educational program within a trimester system of twelve week courses. In addition to single discipline courses there are inter-disciplinary courses, independent study opportunities, and a variety of off-campus learning programs in the community.

Advisory/governing councils consisting of parents, faculty, staff, and sometimes students have been established at all five SEA schools. An SEA

Management Team of principals and managers of K-12 service programs share project-wide decision making with the SEA director. A project-wide board, the Southeast Council, is composed of parent and staff representatives from each school and other community representatives and serves in a strong advisory capacity to the SEA director.

A Teacher Center has been established to provide teachers with an opportunity to receive substantial in-service training as well as to provide an avenue for preservice experiences. An In-service Committee made up of teachers from the SEA schools receives proposals and acts on them, thus providing a direct role for teachers in the staff development activities. The University of Minnesota and Minneapolis Public Schools jointly operate the Teacher Center which was first initiated with federal SEA funds.

Two evaluation teams are directly involved with the SEA project. Level I (Internal) evaluators work for the Minneapolis Public Schools and are administratively responsible to the SEA director. The Level I team conducts formative evaluation activities as requested by project participants such as parents, students, faculty, administrators and the Board of Education. The purpose of this type of formative evaluation is to provide information that will be useful in developing effective educational programs and improving the project.

The Level II Evaluation team is organized by the ARIES Corporation. This external team is known as the Minneapolis Evaluation Team (MET) and is accountable directly to N.I.E. The purpose of external evaluation is to independently collect information of a summative nature about SEA which will be of use to practicing educators who are in the process of designing, implementing or operating programs to improve education.

Preface

This study was conducted as a formative evaluation task for Marshall-University High School. Since it is not designed to be used summatively or externally, much background information and possible resulting qualifiers that are already generally known by the appropriate decision makers have not been included. Therefore, results and discussion herein should not be generalized to other situations or schools; nor should the results be construed as a summative evaluation of either the school or the students who have elected to graduate early.

Special thanks to Susan Demet for editorial assistance and to Elizabeth Pilman and Rose Salo for clerical assistance.

I. Introduction

A study of the Early Graduation Option was included in the Southeast Alternatives/Marshall-University High School Plan for 1974-75, although little systematic research was undertaken in connection with the study from the opening of the school term in September until November 1, 1974. At that time a new Internal Evaluator was hired to assume responsibility for the study. She was assigned three specific tasks:

1) To determine the level of satisfaction of those students who have, from the time of the program's formal inception in 1970-71, opted for Early Graduation (i.e., graduation before June of their twelfth school year).

2) To compare the level of satisfaction of students presently undertaking the Early Graduation option with that of students who had undertaken that option in the previous four years.

3) To determine if any trends had developed in the program which should be known or dealt with by SEA decision makers.

The last of these tasks reflected a general feeling among SEA decision makers that, for reasons not readily apparent, increasing numbers of students had in recent years elected to graduate early.

Several methods were used to gather data on the topic of early graduation. First, questionnaires were sent to former Marshall-University High School (MUHS) students who had graduated early. Second, interviews were conducted with students who were planning to graduate early during the 1974-75 academic year. Third, interviews were conducted with students who had accumulated enough credits to graduate early but had nevertheless elected to stay in school for the entire senior year (1974-75). Fourth, interviews were conducted with four MUHS senior high teachers who were familiar with many of the present and past early graduates.

This report on early graduation is divided into four sections: the first three sections discuss the four data collection procedures (the two interviews with students are discussed together). The fourth section

compares the data and summarizes the major findings.

II. Questionnaires to Former Marshall-University High School Early Graduates

Probably the most tedious step in this study of Early Graduation was the first--determining who had graduated or intended to graduate early.

Since the evaluator was new to the record keeping procedures at the high school, a sense of frustration was felt in understanding the records. Now, however, it seems that the following situations were true at the time of the study.

- Although several school personnel had information about early graduation the attendance clerk had the master list of early graduates.
- Students had been requested to file a letter of intent to graduate early, with the counselor, five weeks before the end of a trimester in which he or she intended to graduate. This procedure has since been dropped. The counselor viewed this procedure as merely an intent which was in no way binding. In fact, it was not necessary to file the letter to graduate early; however, students were encouraged to do so and to discuss their intentions with counselor as well as parents and teachers.
- An elaborate system for coding the early graduates' credit distribution was originally proposed for this study. The system proved unfeasible and that part of the study was abandoned. This does not mean that the records were at fault, but the information kept was not as detailed as the evaluator's plan had demanded.
- Four students whose names were on the attendance clerk's list as early graduates returned their surveys marked, "I did not graduate early." They may have been students who completed requirements for

graduation mid-year of their fifth year. Anyone completing requirements for graduation before June is recorded as having graduated early.

Table 1. Number of Early Graduate Surveys Sent, Early Graduates Contacted, and Percent of Early Graduate Surveys Returned

	Survey Sent			Actually Contacted through Mail			Responded to Survey			
Class	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	Total %
1970-71	8	11	19	8	9	17	2	5	7	41%
1971-72	5	19	24	4	16	20	1	15	16	80%
1972-73	12	18	30	12	14	26	8	6	14	52%
1973-74	7	18	25	7	14	21	3	10	13	62%
TOTAL	32	66	98	31	53	84	14	36	50	59.5%

About sixty percent (59.5%) of the early graduates who were contacted responded to the survey. The response ranged from a low of about 40% of the 1970-71 early graduates to a high of 80% of those from the 1971-72 school year. Although there was a significantly higher response from the females whom we contacted than from the males, we found the females considerably more difficult than the males to contact. (See Table 1) One may hazard the conclusion that females, owing perhaps largely to the abandonment of their maiden names after marriage, are harder to keep track of after they graduate than males, but that once contacted, females are more likely than males to reply to the questionnaire.

Table 2. Reasons for Graduating Early

Class	Dislike of School (Particularly MUHS)			Felt Too Grown Up for High School			Earn Money/Work			Wanted to Travel		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
1970-71	2	2	4	0	2	2	1	1	2	0	0	0
1971-72	0	10	10	1	2	3	0	5	5	0	1	1
1972-73	2	3	5	0	0	0	3	3	6	0	0	0
1973-74	1	4	5	0	2	2	2	2	4	0	1	1
TOTALS	5	19	24	1	6	7	6	11	17	0	2	2

Class	Start Post-Sec. School/ College Early			Had the Credits			School Not Challenging			Friends Doing It		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
1970-71	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0
1971-72	1	2	3	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	2	2
1972-73	1	1	2	4	2	6	0	1	1	0	0	0
1973-74	0	3	3	0	2	2	0	5	6	0	0	0
TOTALS	2	7	9	4	7	11	0	7	8	0	2	2

Why did the students wish to graduate early? The most frequently recorded reason (30%) was a "dislike of school"; the second most frequent, "to early money or work." These two categories cover over half (58%) of the respondents' stated reasons. But other responses occurred with some frequency. Simply "having the requisite credits" for graduation inspired some (14%) to decide to graduate before the end of their senior year, while "finding school unchallenging," "feeling too grown up for high school," and "starting post-secondary school/college early" accounted for an additional 30% of the responses

(10% for each category). "Wanting to travel" or "friends graduating early" seemed to be comparatively minor reasons for early graduation.

Finally, no sex differences were observed in the responses to the survey, and although for both sexes some shifts can be noticed over the years, none of them seem to constitute significant trends.

Table 3. How Did You Learn About the Early Graduation Program?

	Other Students			Counselors			Doesn't Remember		
Class	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
1970-71	0	3	3	1	3	4	0	0	0
1971-72	0	8	8	1	4	5	0	1	1
1972-73	5	5	10	3	4	7	0	2	2
1973-74	2	7	9	0	1	1	0	1	1
TOTALS	7	23	30	5	12	17	0	4	4

	Teacher			Assumed It True			Memos		
Class	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
1970-71	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
1971-72	0	3	3	0	1	1	1	0	1
1972-73	1	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
1973-74	0	0	0	1	2	3	0	0	0
TOTALS	1	5	6	1	4	5	1	0	1

The most important source of information about early graduation comes from other students (47%). In addition, fellow students appear to have become an increasingly important source of such information over the years, while other source categories, such as "counselors and teachers," show a decline. A small number of students from almost every year stated that they believed or assumed that early graduation was possible even though they had never heard about it from anyone else.

Table 4. When Did You Begin to Plan to Graduate Early?

Class	9th			10th			11th			12th			Other		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
1970-71	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	3	0	4	4	0	0	0
1971-72	0	0	0	0	3	3	0	4	4	1	5	6	0	3	3
1972-73	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	2	3	5	4	9	0	0	0
1973-74	0	1	1	1	4	5	1	3	4	1	2	3	0	0	0
TOTALS	0	1	1	2	7	9	4	10	14	7	15	22	0	3	3

About half of the students who graduated early did not consider doing so until their senior year. For those students, the decision appears to have been based on the simple observation that they had accumulated sufficient credits to do so. One must also note, however, that over the years there seems to be a trend among students toward increasingly earlier determination to undertake the early graduation option.

Table 5. Would Any Changes at MUHS Have Caused You to Reconsider Your Decision?

Class	YES			NO			More interesting/ challenging courses			Project AWARE		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
1970-71	1	0	1	1	5	6	0	0	0	1	0	1
1971-72	1	7	8	0	9	9	0	5	5	0	0	0
1972-73	2	4	6	3	2	5	1	1	2	0	1	1
1973-74	2	2	4	2	8	10	2	1	3	0	1	1
TOTALS	6	13	19	6	24	30	3	7	10	1	2	3

Class	More outside possibilities			Better administration			TV Studio			Better sports		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
1970-71	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1971-72	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
1972-73	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
1973-74	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTALS	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1

Class	More School Spirit			Stricter		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
1970-71	0	0	0	0	0	0
1971-72	0	1	1	0	0	0
1972-73	0	0	0	1	2	3
1973-74	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTALS	0	1	1	1	2	3

Sixty-one percent of the students responding to the early graduation questionnaire felt that nothing could have been done by MUHS to cause them to reconsider their decision to graduate early. The remaining 31% felt that changes by the high school could have made a difference. More than half of the thirty-nine (52.6%) stated they would have reconsidered graduating early if the curriculum had been more interesting or challenging. The other reasons given seemed to reflect various individual interests and needs without showing any patterns. (The category Project AWARE referred to comments such as "If I could have taken it again.")

Table 6. Did Any of Your Friends, Brothers or Sisters Graduate Early?

	Brother(s)			Sister(s)			Friends			None		
Class	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
1970-71	1	0	1	1	0	1	2	5	7	0	0	0
1971-72	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	13	13	1	1	2
1972-73	0	1	1	0	2	2	4	5	9	3	1	4
1973-74	2	1	3	1	0	1	2	7	9	0	3	3
TOTALS	3	2	5	2	4	6	8	30	38	4	6	9

Eighteen percent of the respondents did not have friends or sibling who were early graduates. This seems to be a fairly large percentage when one considers the responses to Question Two, the question pertaining to source of information. To that question respondents most frequently indicated "friends" as their greatest source of information. As for the nine respondents who indicated that neither siblings nor friends had provided them with information concerning the program, it is not inconceivable that they learned about early graduation from such alternative sources as counselors or teachers.

Table 7. Who Besides Yourself Was Involved In Making the Decision?

Class	Friends			Parents/Family			Counselors			Teachers		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
1970-71	1	2	3	2	4	6	0	2	2	0	0	0
1971-72	0	3	3	1	3	4	1	3	4	0	3	3
1972-73	1	1	2	2	1	3	0	0	0	2	1	3
1973-74	0	2	2	0	4	4	0	1	1	0	1	1
TOTALS	2	8	10	5	12	17	1	6	7	2	5	7

Class	Siblings			No One		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
1970-71	0	1	1	0	0	0
1971-72	0	0	0	0	9	9
1972-73	1	0	1	3	4	7
1973-74	0	0	0	3	5	8
TOTALS	1	1	2	6	18	24

Half of the respondents (25) said that no one else was involved in their decision to graduate. Of the remaining half of the respondents, 68% involved their parents in making the decision to graduate early. Several students also sought the advice of friends, counselors, and teachers, but in only two instances were siblings consulted.

The question which elicited the above responses could be improved. At present it is worded in such a way that the responses must be regarded as somewhat questionable. Perhaps it should have asked "With whom did you discuss the idea of early graduation before you made the decision?" As it is, many students indicated that they alone made the decision, but we do not know if they discussed the option with anyone else before coming to that decision. The original interest was in the latter question.

Table 8. How Did Your Parents or Guardians Feel About Your Decision to Graduate Early?

Class	Agreed or Approved			Had Reservations			Have Their Feelings Changed? YES			NO		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
1970-71	2	5	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	5	7
1971-72	1	13	14	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	13	14
1972-73	6	6	12	1	0	1	0	0	0	6	6	12
1973-74	3	10	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	10	13
TOTALS	12	24	46	1	1	2	0	0	0	12	34	46

Two students (about 4%) indicated that their parents or guardians had reservations about their early graduation. Neither of these respondents replied to the second part of the question about change in the parents' feelings. None of the other respondents thought that their parents or guardians had maintained their negative feelings or had changed their earlier positive attitudes.

Table 9. In Retrospect, How Do You Feel About Your Decision to Graduate Early?

Class	Glad/Very Good Decision			Glad, But...,			Regret It			No Difference		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
1970-71	1	4	5	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
1971-72	0	10	10	1	2	3	0	1	1	0	2	2
1972-73	6	4	10	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	2
1973-74	3	10	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTALS	10	28	38	2	4	6	1	1	2	1	3	4

Thirty-eight of the respondents (76%) felt the decision to graduate early was a very good one. Two people--one of them in the military, the

other a mother and housewife actually regretted the decision in retrospect. Six others said they were glad they had graduated early, but regretted not having had the opportunity to participate in spring senior year activities. Another early graduate regretted her failure to use her extra quarter of free time more wisely and maturely. Four others felt that graduating early had made no difference at all in their lives.

Table 10. Were You a Transfer Student From Outside the SEA Area?

Class	YES			NO			Do You Know About Early Graduation YES			NO			Reasons for Transferring
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	
1970-71	0	0	0	2	5	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	
1971-72	0	1	1	1	14	15	0	1	1	0	0	0	Interesting courses, smaller classes, indep. study
1972-73	3	1	4	5	5	10	1	0	1	2	1	3	Poor schools in my area. SEA sounded good, father trans. innovative prog. Husband trans.
1973-7 1973-74	1	4	5	2	6	8	0	1	1	1	3	4	None given. Alternatives, good reputation, didn't like my school
TOTALS	4	5	10	10	30	40	1	2	3	3	4	7	

Of the 45 people responding to this item, 10 were transfers into SEA. Of those 10 transferees, only 3 knew about the early graduation before transferring. None of the 3 who knew about the early graduation program said that it had had anything to do with their transfers. The most frequently given reason for transferring was "heard about the alternatives program" (N=6).

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Table 11. What Did You Do After Graduation?

Class	Worked			Traveled			Nothing/Relaxed			Started College		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
1970-71	2	2	4	1	2	3	0	1	1	1	3	4
1971-72	0	10	10	0	1	1	0	3	3	1	4	5
1972-73	6	5	11	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	2	3
1973-74	2	8	10	0	1	1	1	1	2	0	1	1
TOTALS	10	25	35	1	5	6	1	5	7	3	10	13

Most of the students have chosen to work after high school graduation. With such small numbers it is difficult to discern a trend, but over the four years surveyed it looks as if increasingly fewer students are starting college early or traveling in the extra time given by early graduation.

Table 12. What Are You Doing Now?

Class	Post secondary/college			Working			Unemployed			Housewife/ Married			Military		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
1970-71	1	2	3	1	3	4	1	1	2	0	1	1	0	0	0
1971-72	0	11	11	1	4	5	0	0	0	0	3	3	0	0	0
1972-73	4	4	8	3	5	8	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1
1973-74	2	9	11	1	1	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTALS	7	25	33	6	13	19	1	2	3	0	5	5	1	0	1

Most (86%) of those early graduates surveyed are involved in some type of schooling (either college or technical training schools). About 40% of the early graduates are employed at present. Several of them are holding down jobs on a part-time basis. Three of the females are exclusively housewives

and two others are both married and employed. None of the men indicated whether or not they were married.

Three of the fifty respondents were neither employed nor pursuing an education at the time they filled out the questionnaire--a proportion which coincides with the currently prevailing rate of unemployment in the Twin Cities.

Summary

.For the most part, the respondents indicated a "dislike of school" as their primary motive for early graduation.

.Early graduates' biggest source of information about early graduation was their friends.

.Most of them opted for early graduation during their senior year, although recent early graduates tend to indicate increasingly earlier decisions.

.The majority of those students surveyed did not feel that anything that MUHS could have done would have encouraged them to remain for the entirety of their senior year. Those who did indicate that they would have reconsidered the decision thought that a more interesting and challenging curriculum would have persuaded them to stay.

.A large proportion of the respondents had either friends or brothers and sisters who were early graduates.

.About half of the students made the decision to graduate early alone. The other half talked mainly to their parents about the decision.

.Only a few parents had any reservations about their children graduating early.

.About three-fourths of the early graduates are very glad they graduated early.

.None of the transfers who were early graduates made the transfer because the early graduation option was available at MUHS.

.Most of the early graduates began work immediately after graduation.

.Eighty-six percent of the early graduates are presently involved in some type of post-secondary education. Forty percent of them are working (some are both working and going to school).

In conclusion, the students seem to be very happy with their decision to graduate early. If anything would keep a large portion of them in school longer, it would be more advanced or interesting courses. The students seem to use the time mainly as a way of earning additional money for future schooling.

III. Student Interviews

Present students at MUHS with 55 credits or more were interviewed in December and January for their comments about early graduation. There were three categories of students: 1) students who planned to graduate early in the Fall trimester, 2) students who planned to graduate early in the Winter trimester, and 3) students who planned to graduate in the Spring trimester (regular graduation) but had enough credits to have graduated early (either Fall or Winter). (See Table on page For copies of the interview schedules used see Appendix

The following pages summarize the results for each of the topics covered by the interview questions. The format is a frequency chart and then a brief paragraph or two explaining or interpreting the chart. Please note that not all the rows will add to the same constant because some students gave two or more responses to a particular question.

Table 13. Number of Students Who Have Accumulated Sufficient Credits to Graduate Early

Fall (December)	Winter (March)*	Spring (June) (Juniors)
6 enough credits	25 enough credits	2 enough credits
6 plan to	16 plan to	+6 plan to
6 interviewed	**22 interviewed	++1 interviewed

*The students who had enough credits but did not plan to graduate early are the regular spring graduates referred to in this report.

**Three of the winter grads were out of town at the time of the interviewing (one in Washington, D.C., the others in Northern Minnesota).

+One of the early spring graduates refused to be interviewed.

++For reporting purposes the spring early graduate (junior) is included in the winter tabulations instead of with the regular spring graduates (seniors).

Table 14. Reasons For Graduating Early or Not Graduating Early

Early Grads	Dislike of School (MUHS)	Earn Money/Work	Too Grown Up	Travel	College Early
Fall	2	2	1 (M=1)	0	1
Winter	7 (M=1)	6 (M=2)	3	2 (M=1)	0
TOTAL	9	8	4	2	1

Early Grads	Had Sufficient Credits	School Not Challenging	Friends Doing It
Fall	0	1	0
Winter	3 (M=1)	0	2
TOTAL	3	1	2

Reg. Grads Enough credits To Have Graduated Early	Nothing Else To Do	Friends Here	Office or Extra Curriculum	Athletics	Senior Activities	Like Teachers or Classes
Spring	6	2	2	2	1	2

A large number (9 of 23) of the students who were choosing to graduate early did so because they disliked school. Such statements as "I hate school" and "a waste of time" were typical. These comments were harsher in tone among the more recent earlier graduates than among those which has been encountered among the early graduates of previous years. (See Section III). This change may reflect a real increase in recent years in the level of early graduates' dissatisfaction with school, or it may simply reflect the natural human tendency to exaggerate recent grievances and to soften those which occurred in the past.

The second most frequently stated motive for early graduation was to earn money (34%). This confirms the results of a corollary questionnaire.

Students in the 1974-75 class who have elected to stay appear to have done so largely because they have formulated no alternative. The other responses were fairly equally divided among the remaining reasons for staying in school (e.g., to play sports in spring).

Table 15. Communication of Program Option						
	Knowledge Common	Sibs	Counselor	Friends	Assumed it	Teacher
Early Grads Fall	0	1	0	5 (M=1)	0	0
Early Grads Winter	3	0	3 (M=1)	6 (M=2)	2	1
Spring Grads	3	1	1	4	1	1
(enough credits to be early graduate)	6	2	4 (M=1)	15 (M=1)	3 (M=1)	2 (M=1)

From the 1974-75 class results, a new category of source of information appeared--"Common Knowledge." It would appear that this may mean the same as friends," but it was never stated in this manner in the previous questionnaire responses. It may mean that early graduation is getting to be a more common occurrence among students or in student communications.

The largest source of information is the friends of students. When we calculate this with the response "common knowledge," we gain the impression that students are communicating the bulk of the information about early graduation.

Table 16. Reconsiderations

Early Grads	Some Courses	1974-75 Better Teaching	AWARE	No
Fall	0	0	0	5
Winter	7	1	1	6
	7	1	1	11

Not Early Grad--Regular Spring Grads	Easy Life	If Good Job	If Next Year	More Definite	No
	1	2	1	2	3

From the responses of students who are graduating early, we learn that about two-thirds of the students would not reconsider their decisions under any circumstances. These circumstances include changes in policy or curriculum at the high school. The one-third who would reconsider suggested that additional and more challenging courses would have encouraged them to stay the entire twelve years. Many of them suggested foreign language courses; others mentioned more advanced mathematics and science courses.

Of the students who are staying in school for the entirety of the academic year, there did not seem to be a particular reason given which would make them reconsider and graduate early.

Table 17. Siblings and Friends

Early Grads	Have Early Graduate Siblings	Have Early Graduate Friends	None
Fall	2	5	0
Winter	3	13	0
	5	18	0
Not Early Grads- Spring Grads	Have Early Graduate Siblings	Have Early Graduate Friends	None
	0	6	3

Many of the students who are graduating early have close friends who have done so. The biggest differences between early graduates and regular graduates occur in the categories of "siblings who have graduated early" and "no friends who graduated early." All of the early graduates either have a friend or a sibling who has graduated early or intends to graduate early. On the other hand, none of the spring graduates (regular graduates) have siblings who have graduated early, and a third of them (N=3) do not even have friends who are graduating early.

Table 18. Parents Involved In Making the Decision

Early Grads	Agreed/ Glad	Disagreed/ Reservations	No Difference
Fall	6	0	0
Winter	7	3	4
	13	3	4

Not Early Grads-Spring Grads	Wanted Me To Stay	Wanted Me To Get Out	Didn't Care/ Left It Up To Student
	4	2	3
(Parents aware)	Yes	No	
	9	2	

Although almost all of the students interviewed stated that they were responsible for deciding whether or not to graduate early, most of them indicated that they did discuss the option with their parents. Between the students who are electing to graduate early and those who are not, the largest difference with regard to parental advice occurs in the encouragement to leave school early (13, Early Grad; 2, Reg. Grad). This may reflect the parents' actual encouragement to leave high school or it may merely show that the parents supported what the child had already decided.

Table 19. Transfers Into SE Schools

Early Grad	Transfer	No transfer	Friends
Fall	0	6	0
Winter	2	12	2
	2	18	2
Not Early Grad-Spring	1	8	1

Only three of the 29 students interviewed were transfers into SEA. Early graduation had nothing to do with their transfers into MUHS. They all said that they had friends around the SE area or at MUHS with whom they wished to be with. When questions about the programs pertained to the transfers, they also replied that the curriculum was not an influence for transferring.

Table 20. Plans After Graduation

Early Grads	Work	College or Higher Lrng.	Travel
Fall	4	3	1
Winter	12	10	1
	16	13	2
Not Early Grads-Spring	4	8	3

A very large proportion (79.3%) of all those interviewed planned to attend college or a technical school after graduation from high school. This did not differ between early graduates and regular graduates. There seems to be a difference, however, in the proportion of early (80%) and regular graduates (44.4%) who plan to work after graduation. Consequently there also seems to be a difference in the percentage of early (3.4%) and regular graduates (33%) planning to travel after graduation.

Summary

.Students who decide not to graduate early seem to stay in school because they do not have other more definite plans.

.The majority of the early graduates list as reasons for graduating early dislike of school (39%) or a desire to work and earn money (34%).

.Both early graduates and seniors with enough credits to graduate early stated that friends were the biggest source of information about the early graduation option.

.Most of the early graduates interviewed said that nothing the school could do would cause them to stay until the end of the spring trimester.

.A variety of things such as "more definite plans" or "a good job" might cause some of the seniors with enough credits to graduate early even though they had not previously planned to do so.

.All of the early graduates had friends who were graduating early or a sibling who had graduated early in the past.

.One-third of the regular graduates did not even have friends who were graduating before June.

.All of the regular graduates discussed the option with their parents. About half of them said their parents wanted them to stay in school.

.A few of the early graduates interviewed mentioned that their parents had reservations about their graduating early, but the majority stated that their parents approved or were happy about the decision.

.None of the three transferees interviewed attributed their transfer to the availability of MUHS of the early graduation option.

.A very large proportion of both early and regular graduates planned to attend a post-secondary education institution.

A large number of students from the present class (1974-75) who have accumulated a sufficient number of credits to graduate are female. The difference is even more striking when the early graduates alone are considered. Therefore, it seems to be a more likely option for women than men in this group.

IV. Teacher Interviews

Four teachers were selected to be interviewed. Each of them has taught a large number of students who have chosen to graduate early. They were: Bart McDonough--English (Greek drama, Shakespeare, etc), Judy Devlin--Social Studies, John Freeman--Work Program Coordinator, and Bob Waggoner--AWARE.

The purpose of the teacher interviews was to gather information on students who graduate early and information on the early graduation option in general. Each of the four teachers had contacts with different types of students who graduated early. For example, Freeman has had more students in his classes who are interested in practical education, whereas McDonough has had many more students who are interested in a more liberal arts education. This does not mean that all students who are enrolled in the Work Program are interested in "liberal arts" subjects. The reader is therefore cautioned against lumping together all of the following comments.

Results from interviews

See Appendix VII for a copy of the interview schedule used.

The teachers' general reactions to the early graduation program were mixed. None of the teachers expressed a desire to end the program; however, all of them felt that problems were caused by allowing students to graduate early. One of the problems teachers observed was the entry of the student

into the adult world at a time when he was not sufficiently mature to handle the responsibilities. Another problem expressed by a teacher was that the loss of the most mature and able seniors had a crippling effect on the other students in the school; that it deprived students of leaders whom they might profitably emulate. Another said that the right to graduate early had the effect of depriving others of broader program offerings in consequence of the reduced student enrollment. All of the teachers favored a more enriching school experience to entice seniors to remain the complete year.

Many of the teachers also seemed to view the students' motives to leave the high school as negative. When asked their opinion as to why students graduated early, they responded "to get out of here." To some extent they were being facetious, but the inflection of their voices suggested that the statements bore some measure of serious intent as well. Only one of the teachers responded by saying that "some students mature faster than others and early graduation gives them a chance to develop at an accelerated pace."

Advantages and disadvantages of the program were listed as follows:

Advantages

.Free to go at own pace

.Encourages and allows decision-making on the part of the student

.Permits older students (returnees to school) to proceed at their own pace

.Allows students to earn money for college

.Permits students a breather between high school and college or work so that they may travel or just "bum around"

.Responds to students desires

Disadvantages

.Students might benefit from additional preparation for college

.Once a student is out of high school and into adulthood, there is no chance to return to the freedom in youth--"no going back to innocence"

.Students may be too immature to handle adult responsibilities

.Program not scrutinized enough by school to insure that students are not "manipulating to graduate"

.Program interferes with feeling of community in school

Types of early graduates seem to run the gamut of abilities and interests, but according to the teachers can roughly be categorized as 1) very bright students--those who do well in school and are college material; 2) bright students but not academically inclined--those who will probably not go to college, but perhaps to a trade or technical school, and 3) academically bright students who do not function well in the established school environment--these could be labeled (as one teacher did) the "incorrigibles."

Students' reasons for wanting to graduate early were perceived by the teachers interviewed as:

.Cannot take MUHS any longer

.Peer pressure or conformity to peer goals--sometimes students are influenced by older boyfriends or girlfriends who are already out of school

."Senioritis--students get lazy and want to rest

.Headstart at college

.Earn money to go to college

.Is easy to do

.Because option is there, some will take it

The definiteness of students' plans for after graduation were viewed differently by the four teachers. Student plans were described by one teacher as very clear and by another "uncertain for most students." One teacher viewed student plans as more of a guideline for a particular life style rather than a specific commitment such as "which college to attend."

All teachers agreed that the continuance of the early graduation option would have a decreasing effect on staff allotment. Furthermore, one teacher commented that a decrease in staff allotment would have a deleterious effect on early graduation, for the simple reason that with increased student loads, the teachers would be unable to devote as much time as they had in the past to such programs as independent study, programs essential to early graduation.

Reaction to the usefulness of the program was equally divided. Two teachers felt it was useful; two others felt it had a general negative effect on the school.

Summary

While none of the teachers wished to abolish the Early Graduation Program altogether, all had reservation concerning the perpetuation of the program in its present form. As one teacher put it, "in view of student attitudes in the school, the program is appropriate. The kids have a cosmopolitan attitude, less gung-ho for the high school; they are in a hurry to get to the U." But a fundumental problem remains: the present Early Graduation Program holds for teachers and students alike the unpleasant prospect of reduced staffing and a disruption of the student body's sense of community and stability.

V. Comparisons Between the 1974-75 Class of Early Graduates of the Four Previous Years

There are many difficulties involved in comparing the questionnaire data of Section I with the interview data of Sections II and III. One of the difficulties lies in the diversity of the modes of interrogation. Written interrogatories are used in one instance; oral interrogatories in another. It is obvious that the responses elicited from the two modes are not strictly comparable. Other equally distressing problems are also apparent, but these shall be discussed as they come up in the analysis of the pertinent data.

Table 21. Reasons For Graduating Early

	Dislike of School	Too Grown Up	Earn Money	Travel
Total for 4 previous years by %	30%	9%	21%	3%
Total for 1974-75 by %	30%	13%	27%	7%

	Start School Early	Have the Credits	School Not Chal-lenging	Friends Doing it
Total for 4 previous years by %	11%	13%	10%	3%
Total for 1974-75 by %	3%	10%	0%	6%

Most of the values indicated in Table 20 are very similar, although there are some difference. For example, there are significantly fewer students graduating early in order to begin college than in previous years. In addition, more of the present students than of past responded that they would work the extra time in order to earn money. There was also a significant drop in the number of students who stated as a reason for graduating early the lack

of academic challenge at the school. The other values remained the same.

Table 22. Source of Information About Early Graduation

	Sibs	Other Students	Counselors	Teachers
Total for 4 previous years by %	0%	47%	28%	9%
Total for 1974-75 by %	5%	52%	14%	5%

	Memos	Assumed it	Common Knowledge	Can't Remember
Total for 4 previous years by %	1%	8%	0%	6%
Total for 1974-75 by %	0%	10%	14%	0%

The most interesting information in this table is the new category of "Common Knowledge" (14%) showing a percentage increase which represents the exact decline in percent that the point category of "counselors" shows. Closer inspection will indicate that all formal (adult to student) means of communication (e.g., through

counselors, teachers, memos) are declining as a source of information concerning early graduation while the categories of peer sources (siblings, friends, common knowledge, and assumed it) show increased influence.

Table 23. Reconsiderations

	Yes	No	More Interesting Challenging Course	AWARE
Total for 4 previous years by %	39%	61%	52%	14.5%
Total for 1974-75 by %	45%	55%	89%	11%

	Better Administered	TV Studio	Better Sports	More School Spirit
Total for 4 previous years by %	4.8%	4.8%	4.8%	4.8%
Total for 1974-75 by %	0%	0%	0%	0%

Slightly more students in this year's graduating class said that they might reconsider their decision to graduate early than students of the four earlier classes. In even greater numbers than before, the class of 1974-75 stated that more interesting/challenging courses would

make them stay in school the entire academic year. A few others suggested that if the AWARE option were open to them again, they would stay in school. (Enrollment in the AWARE Program is limited to three trimesters.)

Table 24. Friends or Siblings Who Were Early Graduates

	Brother*	Sister*	Friends*	None
Total for 4 previous years by %	10%	12%	76%	18%
Total for 1974-75 by %	12%	12%	90%	0%

*Some students had both brothers and sisters, or friends and one or more siblings who were early graduates.

It seems that increasing numbers of students have friends or siblings who either have or plan to graduate early. Of those interviewed there was no one who did not know someone who was graduating early. See page 22 for the discussion of early versus regular graduates in this regard.

Table 25. Parental Involvement

	Agreed/ Glad/ Approved	Reser- vations	Indiffer- ence
Total for 4 previous years by %	96%	4%	0%
Total for 1974-75 by %	65%	15%	20%

Fewer students reported in the interview that their parents were highly positive than was found to be the case in the responses to the written survey. This indifference is due in part to the fact that 20% of the students responded orally that their parents were indifferent, while none of those who replied to the equivalent written interrogatory offered responses of similar import. Even with some caution in interpretation, there do seem to be more reservations expressed by parents through these students than was the case with the earlier classes. It could simply be that reservations tend to be stronger during the decision making process than afterwards. On the other hand, the other possibility is, of course, that the parents of the present group of students tend to hold more reservation than was the case in the past. More data is necessary to determine a trend.

Table 26. Transfers into SE

	Yes	No	Know About E.G. Before Transferring Yes	No	Reasons for Transferring: Alternative School	Parent/ Faculty Transfered	Didn't Like My School	Friends	No Reason Given
Total for 4 previous years by %	27%	77%	30%	70%	60%	20%	10%	0%	10%
Total for 1974-75 by %	10%	90%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%

Fewer transfers are early graduates at the present time than were early graduates in the previous four years. Neither now nor in the past does early graduation seem to be an important determinant for transferring into MUHS (SEA).

Table 27. Plans fter Graduation

	Work	School/ College	Travel	Vacation Reflexed	Marriage	Military
Total for 4 previous years by %	73%	12%	14%	27%	0%	0%
Total for 1974-75 by %	80%	75%	10%	0%	0%	0%

The most notable difference in this year's data compared to the previous total is the dramatic increase in the number of students planning to attend post-secondary schools. This could be due to slightly different questions on the written and oral questionnaires. The survey (written)

asks, "What did you do immediately after graduation?" while the interview (oral) asks, "What do you plan to do after graduation?" These are not directly comparable questions. Perhaps the most accurate thing to do is to wait a year and ask, "What did you do immediately after graduation?"

The percentages are much closer if we use the question from the survey "what are you doing now?" (see page 13). The responses to that question indicate 66% of the students from the previous four years are presently attending some type of school. Since neither question is directly comparable to the one in the interview, however, it is difficult to say if the plans of this year's class differ from those in the past.

Summary

Several differences become apparent when we compare this year's data with the data of the past four years of early graduates at MUHS. For example, fewer students than in the past are graduating early in order to start post-secondary schools sooner. Another major difference is the source of information about early graduates. It seems to be coming from the peers rather than the adults in this year's data. For those students who stated that they might reconsider their decision to graduate early, almost 90% said that more interesting courses might cause them to do so. Another difference is the increase in the number of students who know someone well who is or has been an early graduate.

Similarities exist in some areas. Parental involvement is about the same as before, but more students expressed parental reservations than in the past, and more parents were labeled as indifferent than before. Plans after graduation seem similar to previous years with some exceptions (see page 24). Transfers into SE have at no time been influenced by the early graduation option.

Two major trends can be discerned from these data. First, the reasons given to the questions seem more personal or social than before. The contrast could be characterized as a contrast between personal/social considerations and academic/external considerations. The more recent early graduates are considering their own personal or internal needs, while early graduates of previous years seemed to have considered more nonpersonal or external factors, such as getting an early start on college, as a motivation for graduating early. In other words, the present students seem to be considering emotions rather than external benefits such as getting a job earlier than the other students in the class.

Second, fellow students are becoming an increasingly important source of information concerning early graduation. Several students interviewed said they would not have any friends in school during the Spring trimester because they had all elected to graduate early. This could be labeled as "peer influence" or "norm behavior."

APPENDICIES

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

MINNEAPOLIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 1

1042-18th Ave. S.E. Minneapolis, Minnesota 55414

SOUTHEAST ALTERNATIVES

TELEPHONE 612/ 331-6257

December 18, 1974

Dear Early Graduate:

The Marshall-University High School Staff has asked SEA Evaluation to conduct a study of the MUHS Early Graduation Program, which began in the 1970-71 school year. In addition to requesting information from early graduates, we will also be asking students who plan to graduate early and staff their opinions of the program.

The information received from the questionnaires will help the MUHS administration and counselors determine whether the program needs to be revised and, if so, how.

Confidentiality in research is vitally important to the SEA Evaluation Team. Results will be released only in the form of group results. You will notice a code number on your questionnaire. This code number is for follow-up uses and will prevent you from receiving bothersome reminders after you have returned your questionnaire.

When you have completed your questionnaire, please return it as soon as possible in the stamped, self-addressed return envelope provided. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call the SEA Evaluation Office at 331-6257. Thank you for your prompt attention and cooperation.

Sincerely,

V. Katherine Gray

V. Katherine Gray
Internal Evaluator

VKG/rms

P.S. If you were not an early graduate, simply write that on the questionnaire and please return it to us. This will aid in correcting our records and be greatly appreciated.

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Office Use Only	C_____	F_____
	S_____	_____

Appendix II

MINNEAPOLIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SOUTHEAST ALTERNATIVES INTERNAL EVALUATION TEAM

Early Graduation
Questionnaire

1. What were your reasons for graduating early from Marshall-University High School?

2. How did you learn about the early graduation program?

3. When did you begin to plan to graduate early?

4. Would any changes in Marshall-U policies or curriculum have caused you to reconsider your decision? If so, which ones?

5. Did any of your friends or brothers and sisters graduate early? Check which:

_____brother(s) _____sister(s) _____friend(s)

6. Who besides you was involved in making the decision?

7. a. How did your parents or guardians feel about your decision to graduate early?

b. Have their feelings changed? _____Yes _____No
If so, what are they now?

8. In retrospect, how do you feel about your decision to graduate early?

9. a. Were you a transfer from outside the SE area? _____Yes _____No
If yes, did you know about early graduation before transferring?
_____Yes _____No

b. What were your reasons for transferring into SEA?

10. What did you do after graduation?

11. What are you doing now?

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

Appendix III

MINNEAPOLIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 1
1042 18th Avenue S.E. , Minneapolis, Minnesota 55414

SOUTHEAST ALTERNATIVES
TELEPHONE 612/331-6252 6257

January 15, 1975

Dear Early MUHS Graduate:

The SEA Evaluation Office has not received your Early Graduation Questionnaire. We know the questionnaire arrived during the holiday season and you may have been too rushed to complete it and mail it in. With this reminder, however, we hope you will spend a few minutes to answer the questions and promptly return the survey to us.

If you have misplaced your questionnaire, contact the SEA Evaluation Office (331-6257) and we will gladly send you another form.

Your speedy response will greatly assist the MUHS Staff who are interested in making the Early Graduation program more helpful to students. Thank you for your help and cooperation.

Sincerely,

V. Katherine Gray

V. Katherine Gray,
Internal Evaluator

VKG/lc

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A Bundle of Joy

I hope this additional request for your Early Graduation Questionnaire will be received happily. It weighs only 2 ounces and is a darling.

Seriously, I hate to bother you again, but it's very important that you mail the completed Early Graduation Questionnaire in this week. If you have lost it or need some information please don't hesitate to contact me at 331-6257 or write to the SEA Evaluation Office, 1042 18th Ave. SE., Minneapolis, Minnesota 55414.

Sincerely,

V. Katherine Gray

V. Katherine Gray
Internal Evaluator

Appendix V

Name_____

Year_____

Date_____

Interviewer_____

MINNEAPOLIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SOUTHEAST ALTERNATIVES INTERNAL EVALUATION TEAM

Early Graduation
Interview Schedule
(Planning to Graduate Early)

1. What are your reasons for graduating early?

2. Would anything cause you to reconsider your decision? If so, what?

3. How did you learn about the program?

4. a. When did you decide to graduate early?

   b. What prompted it?

5. Have any of your brothers or sisters graduated early?

6. Are any of your friends graduating early?

7. a. Were your parents in on the decision?

   b. How do your parents feel about it?

8. What are your plans after graduation?

9. a. Were you a transfer to Marshall-University High?

   Yes_____ No_____

   If yes, did you know about early graduation before you transferred?

   Yes_____ No_____

   b. What were your reasons for transferring into SEA?

Appendix VI

Name _____

Class _____

Early Graduation
Interview Schedule
(Enough Credits But Not Early Graduate)

1. Are you aware of the early graduation program? How did you learn about it?

2. Did you consider it as an option? What were your reasons for deciding to remain for the regular time?

3. What might make you reconsider early graduation?

4. Have any of your brothers or sisters graduated early?

_____ brother(s) _____ sister(s)

5. Are any of your friends graduating early _____ Yes _____ No

Name(s)

6. Are your parents aware of the early graduation program? How do you think they feel about your consideration and decision concerning early graduation?

7. a. Are you a transfer to Marshall-University High?

Yes_____ No_____

If so, did you know about early graduation before transferring?

Yes_____ No_____

b. What were your reasons for transferring into SEA?

8. What are your plans after graduation?

Appendix VII Name_____

Position_____

Early Graduation - Teacher
Interview Schedule

1. How do you feel about the early graduation program?

2. What do you think are the goals of the program?

3. a. What do you think are the program's advantages?

b. What do you think are the program's disadvantages?

5. Can you describe different types of students who may choose early graduation?

6. What are the main reasons for each of these student-types graduating early?

7. Do students usually have definite plans for their careers after graduation?

_____Yes _____No

8. Do you see any effect on staff allotment by continuing the program?

9. Do you think the program has been useful? Successful?

Epilogue

In response to comments about the draft version of this study, an interview was conducted with the senior counselor at MUHS, Rae Sillman. The format for this interview was the same as the one used with the teachers (see page 57), but included three additional questions. The following paragraphs are a condensed account of that discussion.

In general, Ms. Sillman felt positive about the early graduation program and believed it had been useful and successful.

The counselor viewed the goals and the advantages as similar. Namely, the early graduation option has given students an opportunity to mature intellectually and emotionally. "It has allowed the students to seek challenges when they wanted them and in the areas that they desired. It has also given students a chance for exploration--of themselves, of jobs and of their environment.

The disadvantages that were brought up by the counselor were twofold: (1) To the school, and (2) To the students. The disadvantage to the school was felt to be the loss of "espirt de corps." This was due to the loss of leaders as well as a reduction in the total number of students in the senior class. Ms. Sillman did not see any great effect on staff allotment due to early graduations. She said the one exception to this would be when eleventh year students graduate (graduation at end of junior year). In that instance, the staff allotment would be less.

The disadvantage to the students was that the decision to graduate early may not have been thought through carefully enough.

As to the different types of students who may choose early graduation, Ms. Sillman felt that they were not necessarily the best or brightest; rather characteristics of the early graduates were thought to run

the spectrum of abilities and interests. She did not associate any particular reason for graduating early with a particular type of student. She felt the reasons were as individual as the student.

Students had not defined their career plans at the time of graduation. These plans, according to Sillman, were usually in terms of testing reality by getting a job, getting into community work, or by taking a more advanced level of course work. The specifics of these decisions were less important and were usually seen as ways of clarifying or narrowing a student's goals or career plans.

Ms. Sillman expressed that during the time she has been a counselor at MUHS she has found that early graduates are somewhat less motivated by social causes than by inner direction. The early graduates of today seemed to her to be more interested in getting a job to begin a career or continue their schooling to insure a good life later.

Although Ms. Sillman did not respond directly to the question, "How did you feel about the Early Graduation Study Draft copy?", she did have some strong objections to several statements which appeared in the Draft. These statements have since been modified and this epilogue has been added in response to other of her objections.

In conclusion, Ms. Sillman was asked her opinion about issues raised in the draft copy. She expressed her greatest concern over the need for closer scrutiny of early graduates. She felt that the decision making should have more reflective listening from parents, teachers, and in particular the counselor. Other issues raised were the students' reasons for leaving, providing more challenging courses and parental input.